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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday, May 10, 1944

Subject: VICTORY GARDEN SUMMER GREENS. Information from garden specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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When you mention garden greens, some people think merely of spinach, and let it go at that.

There are still some folks, we suppose, who still don't like spinach, and when you mention garden greens, that's all they can think of, and forget that among the crisp, edible greens are: lettuce, chards, mustard greens, endive, kale, beet greens, parsley, turnip greens, New Zealand spinach, cabbage, collards, and the like.

No meal is complete without greens, either cooked or fresh; in salads or as garnishments. If it's vitamins you want, the nutritional value of garden greens is tops, with no pun intended.

So when you plant that Victory Garden, don't forget greens. Did you know you can plan your garden so you can have green, leafy vegetables all summer and late into the fall? They are easy to grow, take little tending and in the case of beets and turnips - you have a two-way vegetable. You eat tops and bottoms. Young beet tops are delicious cooked with a dash of vinegar. So are turnip greens. Have you tried 'em? They are a little "stronger" than spinach and beet tops, but they are packed with goodness.

We know of a city-dweller whose only Victory Garden is a couple of window boxes. He planted lettuce (didn't put in the seed too deep, you know) in the fore part of April and before the month was out he had a fine crop more than two inches high in less than two weeks. You should have seen his smile of satisfaction. Last year he discovered that lettuce will grow in a window box and also that by picking it at the right time, he was able to have fresh greens for weeks.

~~So those~~ of you that have much more space than a window box, don't forget that you can raise several kinds of lettuce and keep well supplied all summer.

Now let's talk about mustard greens. They are coming into more general use. We know of another gardener who set aside a small space for this purpose last summer and by clipping off the large leaves was able to supply three people with mustard greens at least once a week for nearly three months.

Did someone mention kale? In case you haven't tried it, it can be an all-summer crop, too, like mustard greens, or chard. The Danish people love kale and more than any one nationality, perhaps, favor it. Americans who have tried their famous "Green Koll" (green kale) have tasted a dish they will long remember. Leaves of kale are cut up in a soup made of meat stock from ham. Chunks of ham and merry little yellow Danish dumplings are included in this concoction. Why not try it? Plant some kale today!

We have been talking a lot about the nutritional value of garden greens and also the gustatory delights thereof. After all, some of us still must start to plant our Victory Gardens, but you can plant greens later than many other things, because they are quick growers.

Observe the directions on the packages of seed you buy. It pays to follow them closely. Remember, too, that good gardens aren't just luck. Keep your garden out of the shade. The soil must be well prepared before planting. Don't waste seeds.

After you have sowed your garden greens (or any other part of your Victory Garden, for that matter) don't expect Mother Nature will do the rest. Cultivation, weeding, thinning and watering are rites of the good gardener, you know.

Speaking of thinning, with greens you may find they can be easily transplanted and thus go much farther. This must be done after they have made a good appearance above ground. Beet and chard seeds form several plants from each, so thinning applies especially in these cases. Small seeds are usually planted three or four times

as thickly as the final stand expected, and thinned as they grow.

One thing more, don't let the weeds gain on you. We knew a Victory Gardener who did everything, just as the "book" said and then couldn't understand why the weeds should keep cropping up to spoil it all.

Don't abandon your vegetable army to the enemy weeds.

Here's a tip: a mulch of straw or dried lawn grass clippings between the rows will hold moisture and help keep down weeds,

Did we mention insect pests? Just time for a short suggestion there. These are the fifth columnists of the gardening game. See local experienced gardeners, or bulletins available at the County Agricultural Agent's office will give you expert help along this line.

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